

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 1211

PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR POWELL, BREZINSKI

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ASAD'S PRESS CONFERENCE FOR PRESS PARTY
ACCOMPANYING SECRETARY VANCE

1. FOLLOWING IS UNOFFICIAL TEXT OF PRESIDENT ASAD NEWS
CONFERENCE WITH AMERICAN JOURNALISTS ON OCCASION OF
SECRETARY VANCE VISIT:

ASAD. HELLO AND WELCOME TO SYRIA.

QUESTION: WHAT HAS CAUSED YOU TO MODERATE YOUR VIEWS
REGARDING THE EXISTENCE OF A JEWISH STATE IN THE MIDDLE
EAST?

ASAD. IN FACT, WE WERE NOT IN THE PAST MODERATES AND WE
ARE NOT NOW EXTREMEISTS. OUR GOALS HAVE NOT
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CHANGED. OUR GOALS ARE TO ACHIEVE JUST PEACE IN THE REGION.
IN THE PAST WE CALLED FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAEL FROM
THE TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND FOR ITS RECOGNITION
OF THE RIGHTS OF THE ARAB PEOPLE OF PALESTINE AND THAT'S
WHAT WE ARE NOW CALLING FOR. THE QUESTION IS A QUESTION
OF SEEKING FACTS AND JUSTICE AND NOT A QUESTION OF
MODERATION AND EXTREMISM.

2. Q. DO YOU THINK THAT THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE CAN BE RESUMED SOMETIME DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR? AND IF SO, HOW DO YOU THINK THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION FOR THE PALESTINIANS CAN BE SOLVED?

A. IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT CONTACTS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE BEING RECONVENED DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR. AND WHEN WE SAY THAT SUCH A POSSIBILITY EXISTS, THIS MEANS THAT THERE IS A POSSIBILITY WHICH SHOULD BE EXISTING WITH REGARD TO OVERCOMING THE PRESENT PROCEDURAL DIFFICULTIES.

Q. MR. PRESIDENT, COULD YOU TELL US WHETHER YOU SHARE PRESIDENT SADAT'S CONCEPT OF A FEDERATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE WITH JORDAN AND WHETHER THIS SHOULD BE AGREED TO BEFORE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE?

A. IN SYRIA WE ARE ADVOCATES OF ARAB UNION AND WE SUPPORT ANY UNIONIST STEP WHICH MAY TAKE PLACE BETWEEN ANY TWO ARAB COUNTRIES AND THEREFORE WE SUPPORT ANY UNIONIST MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE ANTICIPATED PALESTINIAN STATE AND JORDAN. ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT AWARE OF THE INTENTIONS OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED. HOWEVER, I IMAGINE THAT THIS QUESTION HAS NO RELATION WITH THE GENEVA CONFERENCE OR, IN OTHER WORDS, THERE SHOULD BE NO RELATION BETWEEN THE POSSIBILITY OF UNIONIST RELATIONS

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TAKING PLACE BETWEEN THE ANTICIPATED PALESTINIAN STATE AND JORDAN ON ONE HAND, AND THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON THE OTHER HAND.

3. Q. MR. PRESIDENT, WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT IN EXILE PRIOR TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE?

A. THIS IS A MATTER THAT CONCERNS THE PLO, BUT MY PERSONAL OPINION IS THAT THERE IS NO USE OF ESTABLISHING A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT IN EXILE AT THIS STAGE SO FAR.

4. Q. MR. PRESIDENT. DO YOU FEEL THAT IT IS TIME NOW FOR THE PLO TO TAKE SOME STEPS TO AFFIRM ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST WITHIN THE REGION?

TRANSLATOR: TO AFFIRM?

Q. TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST WITHIN THE REGION? EVEN INDIRECTLY?

A. INDEED, I DON'T WANT TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE PLO SINCE THE QUESTION CONCERNS THE PLO.

Q. MR. PRESIDENT, I WONDER IF I MIGHT ASK YOU, SIR, WHAT YOU THINK THE IMPLICATIONS ARE OF THE REPORTS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A CONNECTION BETWEEN KING HUSSEIN AND THE AMERICAN CIA AND ALSO WILL THIS AFFECT YOUR RELATIONS WITH JORDAN?

A. I DON'T KNOW WHY THIS QUESTION HAS BEEN RAISED AT THIS TIME IN PARTICULAR. I DOUBT THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KING HUSSEIN AND THE U.S. IS THAT RELATIONSHIP WHICH HAS BEEN DESCRIBED BY CERTAIN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS. OF COURSE, WE ARE AWARE THAT THERE IS A FRIENDSHIP
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BETWEEN THE KING AND THE U.S., BUT THIS IS ONE THING AND WHAT HAS BEEN RAISED IN THE AMERICAN PRESS IS ANOTHER THING. AT ANY RATE, THE JORDANIAN SPOKESMAN HAS CATEGORICALLY DENIED THIS STORY AND THE STORY HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED BY ANY OFFICIAL, RESPONSIBLE AMERICAN SOURCE.

5. Q. MR. PRESIDENT, YOU SAID EARLIER THAT YOU THOUGHT THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS TO OVERCOME THE PRESENT PROCEDURAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF A GENEVA CONFERENCE. WHAT POSSIBILITY ARE YOU ADVOCATING TO OVERCOME THESE DIFFERENCES AND WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES?

A. IF ISRAEL IS GOING TO RESPOND TO THE PEACE EFFORTS, THEN IT HAS TO RECOGNIZE THE PREREQUISITES OF PEACE IN THE REGION. AND RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE ARAB PEOPLE OF PALESTINE IS ONE OF THESE BASIC PREREQUISITES.

6. Q. MR. PRESIDENT, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO KEEP SYRIAN TROOPS IN LEBANON UNDER THE PEACEKEEPING ROLE ON A MORE OR LESS PERMANENT BASIS OR CAN YOU PERCEIVE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THEY WILL BE WITHDRAWN?

A. WE ARE IN LEBANON TO HELP OUR LEBANESE BROTHERN TO ACHIEVE SECURITY IN THE COUNTRY AND WHEN THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES AND LEBANESE INSTITUTIONS ARE ABLE TO CARRY OUT THIS TASK, THEN PROPER CIRCUMSTANCES WILL BE EXISTING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF OUR FORCES IN ORDER TO RESUME THEIR BASIC TASK IN OUR COUNTRY.

7. Q. MR. PRESIDENT, COULD YOU TELL US HOW YOU
FEEL ABOUT THE ISRAELI INSISTENCE THAT THE ARABS PEACE
FORCES WITHDRAW FROM THE NABATIYA AREA IN
SOUTHERN LEBANON?

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A. WELL, THE STARTING POINT FROM WHICH ISRAEL STARTS
IN THIS CONNECTION IS THE AGGRESSIVE SPIRIT OF ISRAEL.
OTHERWISE, WHY SHOULD ISRAEL ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE IN
THIS WAY IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF AN INDEPENDENT SOVEREIGN
COUNTRY WHICH IS A MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS? WILL
THE ISRAELIS ALLOW THE LEBANESE PRESIDENT TO TELL HER THAT
ITS FORCES SHOULD BE CONCENTRATED HERE OR THERE? WHY
SHOULD ISRAEL GIVE HERSELF THE RIGHT TO PRACTICE THINGS
AGAINST OTHER COUNTRIES WHILE IT DOES NOT ALLOW THE
SAME THINGS TO BE PRACTICED TOWARDS HER? BESIDES, THE
SOUTHERN PART OF LEBANON IS, OF COURSE, A PART OF LEBANON
AND IT IS NOT NATURAL TO PREVENT THE LEBANESE PRESIDENT
FROM MOVING FORCES WHICH ARE UNDER HIS DISPOSAL TO THIS
PART OR ANY OTHER PART OF HIS COUNTRY. AT ANY RATE, AS
YOU KNOW, THIS QUESTION CONCERNS THE LEBANESE PRESIDENT
WHO HAS THE FULL RIGHT TO TAKE THE PROPER DECISION.

8. Q. MR. PRESIDENT, DID YOU DISCUSS WITH THE SECRETARY
OF STATE THE POSSIBILITY OF SYRIA RECEIVING MILITARY
EQUIPMENT FROM THE U.S. FOR THE FIRST TIME?

A. NO, WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED THIS.

9. Q. MR. PRESIDENT, CAN YOU TELL US WHETHER YOU WOULD LIKE
TO SEE SECRETARY VANCE CONTINUE HIS EFFORT AS HE JUST
DEMONSTRATED THIS WEEK? AND DO YOU THINK THAT
THE U.S. CAN, IN FACT, PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN MOVING THE
PROCESS TOWARD AN OVERALL SOLUTION?

A. MR. VANCE HAS LEFT A POSITIVE IMPRESSION WITH ME.
OUR DISCUSSION WERE USEFUL AND FRUITFUL. WE HAVE DIS-
CUSSED THE EXISTING POSSIBILITIES AND THE POSSIBILITIES
THAT MAY EXIST AT THIS STAGE TO MOVE TOWARD A JUST PEACE.
ALL OF US ARE AGREED, OF COURSE, TO CONTINUE THESE
EFFORTS TOWARD ACHIEVING THIS PEACE.

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10. MR. PRESIDENT, I'D LIKE TO TRY AGAIN. DO YOU HAVE SPECIFIC

IDEAS ABOUT HOW THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE REPRESENTED
IF AND WHEN THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE IS RECONVENED?

A. IF THE PLO AGREES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONFERENCE,
THEN THE PLO WILL HAVE TO DEBATE OR DISCUSS THE
QUESTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS, OF COURSE,
IN COORDINATION WITH ALL OF US.

11. MR. PRESIDENT, WOULD SYRIA ACCEPT ANY MODIFICATION OF
THE 1967 BORDERS IF ALL OTHER TERMS FOR ESTABLISHING
PEACE WITH ISRAEL COULD BE SETTLED?

A. ABSOLUTELY NO. SYRIA CANNOT GIVE UP A SINGLE INCH
OF ITS TERRITORY WHICH WAS OCCUPIED IN 1967.

12. THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

A. THE PRESIDENT THANKS YOU AND WISHES YOU ALL SUCCESS.
MURPHY

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